

Dr. ROYSE's
SERMON

Preach'd before the

King and Queen,

December 28. 1690.

1711

THE HISTORY OF THE
KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN

BY SAMUEL JOHNSON
ESQ; OF LONDON

IN THREE VOLUMES
THE SECOND

A
S E R M O N

Preach'd before the
King and Queen,

A T
W H I T E - H A L L,
O N

The 28th of *December*, 1690.

By *GEORGE ROYSE*, D.D.

Fellow of *Oriel* College in *Oxon* :

And Chaplain in Ordinary to Their Majesties.

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SEPMON

As it is

King and Queen

AT

WATFORD

ON

The eighth of December 1793

By GEORGE ROYCE D.D.

Chancellor of the University of Cambridge

Preached at the University of Cambridge

in the Chapel of St. John the Evangelist

and of St. Andrew the Apostle

on the eighth of December 1793

Before the University of Cambridge

and the Honorable Society of the

Senate of the University of Cambridge

in the Chapel of St. John the Evangelist

and of St. Andrew the Apostle

on the eighth of December 1793

I

A
S E R M O N

Preached before the
King and Queen.

I St. JOHN, chap. v.
And the latter part of the Third Verse.

--- *And his Commandments are not
grievous.*

TH E Words having no depen-
dence on the Context, and con-
taining only a plain single Affertion, all that concerns me at pre-
sent, is to confirm the truth of them,
and to recommend the Laws of Religion

under this Notion, That they are not Grievous.

In clearing of which Proposition, I shall observe this following method :

I. I shall enquire in what sence the Laws or Commands of our Superiours may become grievous and burdensom to the Subjects.

II. I shall vindicate the Laws of our Religion, from the Imputation of those supposed Grievances and Hardships that are cast upon them.

And, III. I shall draw some Practical Inferences from the whole, to enforce our Obedience to them.

As to the former, the Laws of our Superiours may become grievous to their Subjects in one or all these respects :

Either, first of all, when they offer violence to our Frame, and cross the true Genius and Constitution of our Natures.

And this no doubt is a very hard Imposition, to be obliged to move against the stream, to row against wind and tide, and
to

to thwart the true natural tendency of a reasonable creature.

And therefore did the Commands of our great Master impose any such difficulties upon his Subjects, the complaint then might be somewhat justifiable, That *his Commands are grievous.*

But on the other side, if it can be clear'd, that these men are quite mistaken in the right notion of their own frame and make, that man by his natural frame and constitution, is a religious, as well as a reasonable Creature, and that he has strong propensities and inclinations to Religious Duties founded in his own nature.

If this can be clear'd, I say, then it will follow, That his Commandments are not grievous in this sense, but in the Apostle's words, our *Reasonable Service.*

Rom. 12. 1.

And this shall be the Subject of my first Proposition.

But, secondly, a Law may be call'd grievous and burdensom, when it carries with it only the will and pleasure of the Law-giver, without any good reason or excellency to recommend it.

For

For as the Sovereign then does exercise an arbitrary and despotical Power, when he establishes Laws upon no good Reasons, so the Subject is in no better condition than that of a slave, when he is forced to obey, without understanding the reasons of it.

And this seems to be the Case of the Jewish Law, I mean, those ritual and ceremonious Observances which make up a great part of it.

That a man should be forbidden to eat of such and such Meats; that he must not sow *his field with mingled seed*; that he must not wear a Garment pieced up of *linnen and wool-len*; that he must not *round the corners of his head*, nor cut his beard of this or that fashion.

Lev. 19. 27.

All these Laws, as they carry with them no inherent goodness or excellency to recommend them, so they look like the arbitrary Impositions of God Almighty, and the pure results of an unaccountable Authority.

And therefore as they seem unreasonable in the establishment, so no doubt they will be thought no less troublesome in the discharge.

For

For tho' it must be allowed, that the Will of God is a sufficient reason for our Obedience in all instances where he interposes his authority, yet when our own reason is not convinced of the goodness and excellency of what he commands, when it is conscious of no other obligation, but that which arises from his pure sovereign will and pleasure, in this case a man must drag on heavily in his duty, move as it were by whip and spur, and pay a forced unnatural service, as slaves and flatterers do to their imperious Lords and Tyrants.

And consequently, did the Laws of Christianity carry no other motives for our obedience, but the bare stamp of an uncontrollable authority, the Objection would be strong and forcible, That his *Commandments are grievous.*

But on the other side, if it can be demonstrated, that these Laws are so far from being arbitrary magisterial Impositions, that they seem to be the eternal Laws of our own reason, then his Commands cannot be stiled grievous in this sense; and this shall be the Subject of my second Proposition.

But,

But, thirdly, the Laws of our Superiors may become grievous, when they ravish us of our liberty, and destroy the right exercise of our natural freedom.

For since the sweets of liberty, and the pleasure of living at large are so highly agreeable to humane nature, and so eagerly pursued by all Mankind; therefore if the Laws of Religion did lay unreasonable restraints upon men, and, like so many Fetters and Shackles, did tie them up from the enjoyment of their true liberty, there might be some reasonable pretension to allege, That his Commands are grievous.

But, on the other side, if it can be proved, that these men are mistaken in the notion of true liberty, that freedom does not consist in an exemption from Laws, or in living up to the swinge of their Appetites and Inclinations, if it be certain, that there can be no true Liberty where there is no Law, and that the Laws of the Gospel are the only Rules that can instate us in it, then it will follow beyond contradiction, that his Laws are not grievous in this sense. And this shall be the Subject of my third and last Proposition.

Having

Having thus far explain'd in what sense the Laws of our Governours may become grievous and offensive to their Subjects, I come now to my second general Head proposed, *Viz.*

To vindicate the Laws of our Saviour from the Imputation of these Grievances; and this I shall endeavour by confirming the foremention'd Propositions.

And first of all, the Laws of Christianity do not contradict the right frame and constitution of our Natures.

And there needs no other proof of this, but to examine what is the true temper and constitution of a reasonable Creature.

For the main reason why Religion all along has been represented so contradictory to, and irreconcilable with our tempers, can be ascribed to nothing else but to a want of due consideration, what is the right frame of a Reasonable Nature.

The Atheist fancies that he is the bare result of matter and motion; the language Libertine thinks that he is nothing but the meer composition of flesh and blood; and

the covetous Miser imagines, that he is only a temporary Machine and Pageant cut out for the Stage of this present World.

Now when men shall entertain such dishonourable Notions of their own frame, resolve all into meer body and matter, and own no other inclinations, but the blind impetus and tendency of these, no wonder if Religion be thought a flat contradiction to our tempers. But this is rather the representation of a Beast, than the true state and account of Humane Nature. And if this be all that goes to make up a reasonable Creature, I can see no difference, besides the shape, betwixt the Horse, that has no understanding, and his Rider.

For assign what difference you please, and call it by the name of Reason, Wit, or Cunning, all these are but pedantick Titles, and undistinguishing Characters, unless we will allow some nobler attainment, I mean a sense and capacity of exercising Religious Duties, to be an Ingredient of his Frame and Constitution.

For

For 'tis plain, as for what we call Reason in general, that Beasts, by a meer natural sagacity, do make such near approaches to it, that we can hardly distinguish betwixt the Cunning of a Brute, and the Reason of some Men.

Bishop Wilk.
Nat. Rel.

And therefore as we would assert the distinction and prerogative of our Natures, we must fix upon some higher Principles to enoble our Frame, and those will be found no other than the Principles of Religion.

For it must be allowed on all hands, that those are the true Principles of a reasonable Nature, that do really distinguish it from all other creatures. And since to be capable of receiving divine impressions, and to pay a rational regard to the Laws of our Maker, are the peculiar priviledges of our natures, that make the true difference betwixt us and the rest of the parts of the visible World; therefore the right frame and constitution of a man does consist in this, that he is a subject fitted for the exercise of Religion.

'Tis true indeed, we usually ascribe the difference betwixt us and other Creatures to our Reason or Understanding; but this is but another name for Religion.

For to speak plainly, Reason is nothing else, but the clear principles of good and evil, truth and falshood, or else the rational consequences and conclusions that are drawn from them.

And therefore the Principles of Religion are no other than the Principles of Reason, as shall be shewn hereafter.

And consequently, to say a man is naturally born a reasonable creature, is the same in effect as to say, that he is naturally a religious creature too, because the right exercise of his reason does consist in understanding and living up to those Laws of Religion, that are laid upon him, and that we may not fancy this a more imaginary notion, do but consider, what strong propensions and inclinations there are in humane nature to religious duties, of which there can be no account given, unless we resolve them into the natural frame and temper of our minds. 'Tis from hence springs that invincible inclination

nation to religious Worship which is so notorious and visible in the World, that they chose rather to worship Stocks and Stones, than to be wanting in that service to which their natures so strongly prompted and inclined them.

'Tis from the same principle that the Laws of Justice and Honesty have so far possessed and over-ruled the minds of men, that they have made choice rather to expire in the observance of them, than to survive their innocence and integrity by transgressing them. All which supposes, that man by his natural frame and constitution is powerfully determin'd to the exercise of those Religious Duties which God and Nature have imposed upon him, and therefore the Atheist may as well say, that Hunger and Thirst are no natural Inclinations of the Body, as that the Laws of Religion are forced and unnatural to the Mind.

And what we assert in general, will be found no less true, should we descend to the particular Laws of the Gospel: for there are but two things, that seem more especially to grate upon humane nature; the one

is

Matth. 5. 29.

is the subduing our Lusts and Passions, which the Scripture expresses under the hard terms of pulling out right Eyes, and plucking off right Hands. And the other is, the sacrificing our Lives to the interest of Religion. But neither of these will appear a violence to our temper, if we view things in their true light.

As to the former, the subduing our Lusts and Passions, this is nothing else but that regular order and œconomy which God has established in the frame of man, that reason should have the ascendant and government over our passions, and that as the Mind is a superior principle to the Body, so it should exercise a peculiar Empire and Dominion over the several inclinations of it, and therefore this is so far from being a contradiction to humane nature, that 'tis the true natural frame and state of it; for in effect, 'tis no more than to say, that the Man should rule over the Beast.

And as for the other, the sacrificing our Lives to our belief and perswasion, 'tis no more, than what the wisest Heathens have taught, and the best have practised.

'Tis

'Tis true indeed, this seems to cross that great Principle of Self-love and Self-preservation, which is so closely interwoven with our natures. But then it must be consider'd, that Self-love and Self-preservation, tho' they are the supreme Law of other Creatures, that have no higher Principles to steer by, yet in a reasonable nature they lye always under the regulation and conduct of a superior Principle, the Mind.

And since the Mind of Man is the nobler part, and more properly stiled the Man, therefore 'tis a greater violence to a reasonable creature to sacrifice the belief and perswasion of his Mind, than to offer up his Body a sacrifice to that : so that upon the whole matter it appears, that the Principles of Religion are so far from crossing the true genius and constitution of our nature, that they seem rather highly suited and agreeable to it.

And this will appear from the second Proposition, *viz.*

That the Laws of Religion are no Arbitrary Impositions of God Almighty, but wonderfully accommodated to the reason of Mankind.

Had

Had God Almighty never interposed his Authority in enforcing these Laws upon us, yet still they would have approved themselves to the reason of Mankind as wholsom rules and provisions at least, such as are admirably fitted to the state of humane nature. The Principles of Justice, Honesty and Gratitude do bear such a congruity with our Reason, that they look rather like the Eternal Laws of our own Natures, than the Magisterial Decrees of our Lord and Master. Whether they are naturally stamp'd upon the mind, or do grow up rather by the exercise of our own reason and discretion, has been matter of dispute amongst some: but both of them suppose, that they are the natural results and genuine dictates of our Mind and Reason. And if we may guess at the reason of Mankind by the unalterable consent and approbation of the wisest men, this will amount to a very fair proof, that the Laws of Religion are nothing else but the common Principles of our own Reason: for 'tis plain, there is scarce any Government in the World, but what has approved of the matter of these Laws, by in-

incorporating them into their respective Politics, and establishing them as a part of the Civil Constitution. And the more any State have improved their Reason, and civilized their Tempers, the higher in proportion they have advanced the Principles of Religion, as particularly under the *Roman* Government.

Now 'tis altogether unaccountable how these religious Rules should meet with such a general establishment, unless they did approve themselves to the general reason of Mankind. To Worship a Supreme Being, to be sober and temperate as to our selves, and to be just and honest to our neighbour, are the main substance of what our Saviour commands, and yet all these we know have had the good luck to meet with a favourable suffrage and entertainment even from those that never discern'd any stamp of Divine Authority upon them.

But how the whole World should conspire in the approbation of these Laws, cannot well be accounted for, unless we own, they have a strong foundation in Humane reason.

The Atheist indeed tells us, that these are the bare positive Decrees and arbitrary Constitutions of the Civil Power, but then at the same time he can't explain, how these should come to be the publick Constitutions of so many different Ages and Countries, unless we allow that the best reason of all Nations and Times have approved the great excellency and reasonableness of them.

And this shews, that these Laws are eternally and intrinsically good in themselves antecedently to any positive Constitution whatever, because the general reception of them in the World can be ascribed to nothing else, but to that inherent goodness and excellency that recommended them.

There is one Objection indeed against what I have urged, *viz.* That there have been several Governments in the World, that had so little sense of these Laws, as not only to approve but to reward those very Vices, that carry a flat contradiction to them, and consequently there is not that reason and excellency to be found in those Laws, for which we are pleading. But

But this is no fair way of concluding what is the best sense and reason of Mankind, by the particular corruption and degeneracy of the worst of men.

Should there be several monstrous Births produced in the World, no one I hope would conclude this to be the regular shape and proportion of a man, but an accidental derivation from it.

In all these cases we must try things rather by the general consent and standard, than by any particular exceptions to the contrary, for there may be Monsters in Morality and Religion too as well as in Nature, but neither of them do conclude against the unalterable Laws of Nature and Reason.

And, that we may discern further the Reason and Excellency of these Laws, I shall shew in the third and last place,

That the Laws of Religion are not such Fetters and Shackles upon Humane Nature as to destroy its true Liberty and Freedom.

That Liberty does consist in an exemption and freedom from Laws, is a Doctrine as false as 'tis popular.

For, to speak properly, a Law in general, is not so much a tie and confinement, as the direction of a reasonable creature, and it serves rather to maintain and enlarge, than to destroy our freedom.

And this is true, whether we respect either our Civil Liberties, as we are Members of a Government, or else the Inward Liberty and Freedom of our Minds. As to our Civil Liberties, 'tis certain what *Tully* affirms, the Laws are *Fundamentum Libertatis*, the Foundation and Spring of all Civil Liberty, and in all Governments whatever, where there is no Law, there is no Freedom. For Civil Liberty is nothing but a freedom from the Violence and Restraint of other Men; and this can never be enjoy'd, where every one shall be permitted to live at his own swinge and pleasure, for then to be sure I shall be soon ravish'd of my Liberty, where every one is left free to invade it.

And

And as our Civil Liberties are rather preserved than oppressed by Humane Laws, so the Inward Freedom of our Minds, is far more advanced, than impaired by the Laws of Religion : For the true Freedom does not consist in an absolute indifferency, without any regard to good or evil, as some imagine.

God and the good Angels are the freest Agents in the World, and yet they are not free to do evil, and when we our selves come to be translated to the same happy state, we shall no longer be so indifferent to either : such an indifferency of the Will to good or evil, is rather an imperfection of our Natures, or, at best, but a relative Perfection accommodated to our present state, and serving the ends of our probation here, but the true perfect Liberty does consist in acting up unalterably to the Laws of our best Reason.

For the clearing of which, we may consider, that Liberty is nothing else but a Power to act thus or thus, according as our best Reason shall determine ; and therefore as the true Liberty is founded in Reason,

son, and lodged only in reasonable Creatures, so the right exercise of it does consist in living up to the Principles of Reason; and consequently, to chuse Evil, is as great an abuse of true Liberty, as 'tis a want of Reason and Discretion.

From whence we may conclude, the absurdity of that Position, That there can be no Freedom where a man is determin'd by Laws. Now this is the same thing as to affirm, That wise Men cannot be free, because they are determin'd by wise Councils and Advices; and at this rate, none but Fools and Madmen would be free, because none but these refuse to be determin'd by wise Proposals, and this is such an odd sort of Liberty, that no man in his wits can ever plead or contend for.

It being allow'd then, that 'tis no abridgment of true Freedom to be determin'd by wholsom Laws, all that remains is to shew, that the Laws of Religion do rather maintain our Liberty than destroy it. And the reason of this is plain and obvious; because these Laws have a natural tendency to free Mankind from the Domi-
nion

nion of those Lusts and Passions, which put the World into a true condition of slavery: for slavery, as it relates to the mind, is nothing else but an unnatural subjection of it to the dominion of sin, by which 'tis put quite out of its own power, and hindred in the free exercise of its reason.

And this is no other Notion, but what Tully and the wiser Heathens have all along taught the World, and therefore he describes it thus, *Obedientia fracti & abjecti animi arbitrio carentis suo*: from whence he concludes, that all wicked men are slaves, because being bound over to work drudgery to their Lusts, they have no longer any commands over themselves, nor power to think or act freely.

And the Scripture does every where reckon them as slaves, by stiling them, *the servants of sin, sold under sin, in captivity under the law of sin*. And this of all others is the greatest oppression of our Liberty, that can be imagin'd; for our Lusts and Passions were born slaves to our Reason and Understanding, and therefore to be sub-
jected

Rom. 6. 16, 17.
Hom. 7. 14.
v. 23.

jected to the dominion of these, is to be a slave to those that were born slaves to us, and he that fancies this to be a true manly Liberty, let him have *his ear bored through*, and be a slave for ever.

And if subjection to Lust and Passion be the true state of Slavery, then consequently the Laws of Religion, that teach us to manage and govern these, are the best Fence and Security of our Freedom. Hence the Religion of the Gospel is stiled the *perfect Law of Liberty*, hence God's Service is call'd *perfect Freedom*, and good men only are honour'd with the Character of *sons and free men*.

In short, this is the only true manly Liberty that I know of in the World, I mean that whereby the mind is set free from the dominion of our Passions, disengaged from the power of Lust, and restored to an empire over it self, which the Sword can't invade, nor the Tyrant reach. This is the Liberty and Freedom of God, Angels, and good men made perfect, which does not consist in an exemption from Laws, but in living up unchangeably and unal-

unalterably to them. And thus much for the third and last Proposition, That his Commands are not grievous in this sense, by destroying our true Liberty and Freedom.

I come now, by way of Conclusion, to draw some Practical Inferences from the several Heads.

And from the first we may conclude, That if the Commands of our Religion be so highly agreeable to our Frame and Constitution, therefore 'tis but highly just and reasonable to live up to the Laws of our own frame. There is no Creature in the World, but what is govern'd by the Laws of its own Nature, the Beasts by a principle of sense, and all other Bodies by the unchangeable Laws of Matter and Motion. And what a shame and reproach is this to Humane Nature, that we alone, who understand the Laws of our Frame, should be the only persons that transgress them.

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From

From the second we may conclude, That if the Principles of Religion be nothing else but the common Principles of our own Reason, therefore as we would maintain the Reputation of our Understandings; so we should act up to the true Dictates of them; and since the Commands of Religion are so highly Reasonable and Excellent in themselves, consequently our Minds should be affected as well with the Goodness and Excellency of those Laws, as aw'd by that Authority which establish'd them.

From the third and last we may conclude, That if the Laws of the Gospel do rather advance than impair our Liberty, therefore we should no longer reflect upon the Goodness and Justice of God Almighty; as if he had imposed so many Fetters and Shackles upon our Natures, but rather Adore, Worship, and give Praise unto him for affording us that perfect Law of Liberty, which alone can set us free.

And

And since a true manly rational Liberty does consist only in a freedom from the Power and Dominion of our Vices, let's all henceforth shake off those Clogs and Ties of Lust and Passion, which have hitherto not only beset, but enslaved us. And then as we shall find our selves free from the slavery of these, so we shall have no reason to complain, That his *Commandments are grievous.*

E I N I S.

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Q U A R T O.

A Sermon Preached before the Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen at *Guild-hall Chappel*, upon *Good Friday*, *March 29. 1689.* By *George Royse*, D. D. Fellow of *Oriel Colledge* in *Oxford*, and Chaplain in Ordinary to Their Majesties.

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O C T A V O.


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